

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 2529

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections, February 21, 2018

Title: An act relating to the costs of election administration.

Brief Description: Concerning the costs of election administration.

Sponsors: Representatives Kraft, Hudgins and McBride.

Brief History: Passed House: 2/09/18, 98-0.

Committee Activity: State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/19/18, 2/21/18
[DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a task force to examine the costs associated with election administration.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hunt, Chair; Kuderer, Vice Chair; Miloscia, Ranking Member; Saldaña and Zeiger.

Staff: Samuel Brown (786-7470)

Background: The Secretary of State is the chief election officer for all federal, state, county, city, town, and district elections in Washington. By virtue of their positions, county auditors are the supervisors of elections in their respective jurisdictions, and have a duty to provide the supplies and materials necessary to conduct elections. County auditors apportion to each city, town, or district within their respective jurisdictions, and to the state, their share of the expenses associated with elections within each county.

Summary of Bill: A task force is created to examine the costs associated with the administration of elections throughout Washington, consisting of the following 12 members:

- a member from each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate;

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- a member from each of the two largest caucuses in the House of Representatives;
- a representative from the Office of the Governor;
- a representative from the Office of the Secretary of State;
- a representative from the Washington State Association of County Auditors;
- a representative from the Washington State Association of Counties;
- a representative from the Association of Washington Cities;
- a representative for special purpose districts, appointed by the Governor;
- a representative for conservation districts; and
- a member of the public at-large, appointed by the Governor.

The Secretary of State will initiate the first meeting of the task force and provide staff support to the task force. The task force will collect data and analyze the following:

- the costs of election administration throughout Washington;
- the variation of costs across counties;
- the impact of existing and future costs on voter participation;
- the cost impact of voter initiatives;
- the costs associated with ballot design and number of ballot measures;
- funding sources for elections in Washington, and their sustainability;
- planning for future voting costs; and
- other issues that may impact election costs.

By December 1, 2018, the task force will submit a report to the Governor and to the appropriate committees of the Legislature that includes the following:

- findings with analysis on the data collected in each category;
- a comparative analysis of costs among counties;
- allocation of costs among the state and local districts; and
- recommendations for the sustainable and equitable funding of election costs.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: Yes.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Counties pick election costs on an ongoing basis, and while the state reimburses costs for state measures in odd-numbered years, there typically aren't as many items on the ballot. This is almost an unfunded mandate for the counties, and we need to look at it.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Vicki Kraft, Prime Sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.